

for telling folks like that, "We're not going to pay you."

Madam Speaker, this needs to be investigated. There are claims adjusters who were so disgusted with what they saw and what they did to individuals that they have turned the insurance industry in for this fraud that has been perpetrated upon the American people.

Madam Speaker, this Democratic Congress needs to keep faith with the people of America and investigate this, because I am convinced that the biggest Katrina fraud of all was ripping off the American taxpayer to the tune of billions of dollars.

□ 1600

DISASTER RELIEF FOR AFFECTED AREAS IN CALIFORNIA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. COSTA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. COSTA. Madam Speaker, I, too, feel, as I believe most Americans do, for those who have been impacted by the effects of the disaster that occurred with Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. And my colleague and good friend from Mississippi makes, I think, strong arguments that it is part of our responsibilities as representatives of the people's House, to, in fact, respond to needs and crises when natural disasters occur.

My district, the 20th Congressional District in California, includes the heart of California, some of the best farm land in the country, from Fresno in the north all the way down to Bakersfield in the south.

I rise this afternoon to address the concerns, the deep concerns that our constituents have because of a lack of Federal support in declaring Federal designation disaster status for the 31 counties in California that were impacted by the freeze that took place in California between January 11 and January 16.

Now, this is a disaster of significant proportions. Unlike a hurricane or a tornado, as we have witnessed recently in other parts of the country, a dramatic freeze takes on different visual effects. But the damages and the impacts to families and their children and people with farms and farm workers, compesinos, can be just as devastating.

Since January 11, January 16, doing our due diligence, Governor Schwarzenegger has declared 31 counties in California available for Federal designation disaster. Yet, we have gone now 6 to 7 weeks without the Federal Government responding. It believes now the total cost of the impact of this freeze to the farms, to the citrus industry, to the vegetable industry is totaling over \$1.3 billion and growing.

These farm workers, these compesinos, are out of work. These farmers have their life holdings in these citrus orchards. The communities, the economic impacts are reverberating throughout the communities within these 31 counties.

Last Friday, we had a listening session on the impacts of agriculture. We had members from the foodbank in California, the Fresno County foodbank, Sarah Reyes, an old friend and former colleague of mine. She indicated that over 3,100 households, which contain over 14,700 individuals, over 7,425 children under the age of 5 years of age or less, have been provided food because these folks have no jobs, because there are no jobs available, because the citrus industry and related industries have been devastated by this freeze.

It goes on. You know, in places like Orange Cove and Parlier and Reedley and Selma and places in Tulare County, we have seen the need to provide food for families increase 1,000, 2,000 percent. The UFW, faith-based organizations have chipped in. The State has paid millions of dollars. But yet the Federal Government response has been lacking.

We have had bipartisan support from Members of the California congressional delegation, by both our United States Senators. Congressman NUNES and myself have introduced an Impact for Freeze Relief for those farm workers, those farmers, their families and the businesses and these small communities. Yet the President has yet to declare, since January 11 through January 16, that these counties are deserving of Federal designation disaster relief.

But in the meantime, my colleagues, since December 19, 14 other States have been declared Federal designation disaster areas. Nebraska, December 19, for severe winter storms; Kansas, January 28, severe winter storms. The President, on January 7, declared both those States disaster areas. Missouri, Oklahoma, Florida, Illinois, Washington State, winter storms, mud slides, tornados, all deserving, I believe, and the President believed, for Federal designation disaster status.

Yet, 7 weeks later, California, that complied with all the requirements under the Federal law in which our Governor made the request, now finds itself, 7 weeks later, without the sort of Federal designation status that we deserve as taxpayers to the Federal Government.

We ask the President, please respond as you have responded in 14 other cases in these other States. Our citizens need the support and the same sort of help that we have given to other parts of the country.

So I ask, once again today, for the President to respond to FEMA and to produce the Federal designation disaster relief that our citizens in California deserve and need for those farmers, for their families, for those farm workers and for the communities they live in.

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of Jan-

uary 18, 2007, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to come before the House once again. And as you know, the 30-Something Working Group, we come to the floor two, three, sometimes four times in a given week, in a legislative week, to share with the Members some of the issues that we are working on and some of the issues that we must tackle here in the 110th Congress.

As you know, the work of the 30-Something Working Group has been going on now for, going on close to 4 years of hard work and making sure that not only the will of the American people prevails in this House, the people's House, this U.S. House, but to make sure that we act, we legislate in an accountable way; also bring about the kind of oversight, and put us on the new direction that we need to be in several of the areas that we face now, such as Iraq, such as making sure that we have affordable health care, making sure that we have a clean environment, making sure that we take care of our veterans. And fiscal responsibility is the backdrop of the overall accountable flag that we stand under.

Mr. Speaker, a lot has happened in the last couple of weeks, and a lot has happened since the 110th Congress took control of the U.S. House of Representatives, Democratic control, and working in a bipartisan way.

I spent a lot of time on the floor in the past talking about the bipartisan votes that have taken place here on this floor because I think that it is something that we should all be proud of. I am not talking about proud Democrats. I am talking about Republicans, Independents that are paying attention to this process, Democrats, first time voters. Individuals that are thinking about voting should be encouraged about the spirit that we have here in the U.S. House of Representatives and making sure that we bring work products that a majority of the Members can vote for, and that means Democrats and Republicans.

These are a few of the votes that I just want to highlight here once again: implementing the 9/11 Commission recommendations, H.R. 1, which was the first bill, Mr. Speaker, we spoke of that we had the opportunity to lead. When I say "we," I am saying the Democratic majority, to be able to bring to the floor, which was a bipartisan 9/11 Commission. And it was a book that many read, and one of the New York Times bestseller books. Passed 299-128, with 68 Republicans voting for it.

Raising the minimum wage, H.R. 2, which was the second bill in this 110th Congress, this Democratic Congress that came up. Again, we must be reminded that the vote was 315-116, with 82 Republicans voting with the Democrats on that particular measure.

Funding for enhancement of stem cell research, H.R. 3, again, bipartisan vote, 253-174.